



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Olympia, WA 98504

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The Washington State Department of Health is pleased to provide you with the *2004 Supplement* to the *2002 Health of Washington State*. The *2004 Supplement* provides information on health indicators by race and ethnicity that was not included in the *2002 Health of Washington State* due to data limitations. The *2004 Supplement* also contains information on the relationship of health with poverty and education.

Poverty and education are important determinants of health in their own right. They also reflect one aspect of what we mean by race and ethnicity. Due to an increased understanding of the human genome, most scientists do not view race as a valid biological construct. Rather in most public health assessment, race and ethnic group should be viewed as capturing the effects of complex social, cultural, economic and political factors on human health.

The *Supplement* supports the Department's efforts to achieve the national goal of eliminating health disparities by 2010. In providing health data by race, ethnicity, poverty and education, the *Supplement* documents large disparities in health outcomes among Washington residents. In general, persons of color and persons living in areas with high poverty or in areas with low levels of formal education have poorer health outcomes than white persons and individuals living in areas with less poverty or higher levels of formal education. The *Supplement* also provides some insight into which factors may be most important to address when trying to reduce disparities.

Public health programs alone cannot ameliorate the social, economic and political forces that are associated with poor health outcomes. But developing a better understanding of the roles of race, ethnicity, poverty and education for health is critical for reducing health disparities in Washington State.

If you wish additional copies of this supplement, please contact the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology, at 360.236.4246.

Sincerely,

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